

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 03000 130830Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3235
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 3000

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT KS
SUBJ: TIMING FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTION AND SPECIAL
SESSION DISCUSSED

SUMMARY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LEADERSHIP IS BEGINNING TO DISCUSS
EXPECTED BY-ELECTION FOR VACANT SEAT IN CHONG-RO DISTRICT.

END SUMMARY

1. DRP ASSEMBLYMAN CHANG KI-YONG'S DEATH APRIL 11 MEANS ROK
WILL HAVE TO HOLD BY-ELECTION FOR CHONG-RO DISTRICT'S TWO SEATS
SOMETIME BETWEEN NOW AND JULY. OTHER CHONG-RO SEAT WAS VACATED
WHEN MYONGDONG DEFENDENT AND NDP ASSEMBLYMAN CHUNG IL-HYONG
WAS RECENTLY REMOVED FROM ASSEMBLY AS RESULT SUPREME COURT
VERDICT AGAINST HIM. ROKG IS CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED TO HOLD
ELECTION WITHIN 90 DAYS OF SPEAKER'S NOTIFICATION OF DOUBLE
VACANCY TO GOVERNMENT, AN ACTION WHICH IN TURN MUST OCCUR
WITHIN 15 DAYS OF SUCH VACANCY. (AS IN KIM OK-SUN CASE, IF ONLY
ONE ASSEMBLYMAN PER DISTRICT LOSES HIS SEAT, THERE IS NO
CONSTITUTIONAL NEED FOR BY-ELECTION.)

2. INTEREST IN ELECTION LIKELY TO BE SUBSTANTIAL BECAUSE
IT IS FIRST SINCE 1973 AND WILL BE WATCHED CLOSELY AS
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INDICATOR OF PUBLIC REACTION TO GOVERNMENT POLICIES. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED SOME NERVOUSNESS ABOUT BY-ELECTION, SINCE CHONG-RO DISTRICT IS CONSIDERED OPPOSITION HOT-BED -- MANY OBSERVERS STILL CONTEND HANKOOK ILBO FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER CHANG'S ELECTION WAS RIGGED -- AND GOVERNMENT NOW FACING MORE DIFFICULTIES THAN IN PAST.
AS WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING, CAMPUS AND OTHER OPPOSITION FEELING

IS RUNNING AT HIGHER LEVEL THIS PRING THAN DURING PAST TWO YEARS AND WHILE NDP REMAINS FACTIONALIZED THERE IS STRONG COMMON DESIRE AMONG MEMBERS TO PROVIDE GOOD ANTI-GOVERNMENT SHOW IN ORDER TO REFURBISH PARTY IMAGE. MAJOR CONCERNRS REGARDING PROJECTED U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL SHARED BY ALL KOREANS IS MORE OF AN UNKNOWN FACTOR BUT COULD BE IMPORTANT. A COMPLICATING FACTOR FOR BOTH GOVERNMENT AND NDP MAY BE CAMPAIGN BY DUP SPLINTER PRTY LEADER YANG IL-TONG. YANG WHO NOT NOW ASSEMBLY MEMBER IS REPORTEDLY ANXIOUS TO RUN.

3. TIMING OF ELECTION NOT YET KNOWN BUT WILL DEPEND ON ROKG'S EVALUATIN OF ABOVE FACTORS AS WELL AS TIMING FOR ANNUL SPECIAL SPRING SESSION OF ASSEMBLY, WHICH NOW ALSO BEING DEBATED. WE ANTICIPATE ROKG WILL WAIT AT LEAST MONTH OR TWO WHEN CAMPUS SITUATION EXPECTED TO BE MOE SETTLED.
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